

THE CHILD OF LIGHT WALKING IN DARKNESS

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A SERMON
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BY C. H. SPURGEON,
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.

*“Who is among you that fears the Lord, that obeys the voice of His servant, that walks in darkness, and has no light? Let him trust in the name of the Lord, and stay upon his God.”
Isaiah 50:10.*

SEE how the Lord inquires for His people? In every congregation He asks this question, “Who is among you that fears the Lord?” These are the wheat upon the threshing floor. As to the thoughtless, “What is the chaff to the wheat? says the Lord.” The Lord’s heart is towards the hearts that fear Him, and He makes inquiry concerning them, because He loves them, and cares for them, and helps them in their day of trouble.

Observe how clearly the Lord describes His own people. The description is brief, but remarkably full, “Who is among you that fears the Lord that obeys the voice of His servant?” Holy reverence within the heart, and careful obedience manifested in the life, these are the two infallible marks of the true man of God. He fears his God, and therefore he obeys that heavenly messenger whom God has sent. No servant of God has such authority over us that we are bound to obey Him in all things, except One, that *Servus servorum*, that Servant of servants, who was also *Rex regum*, the King of kings. It is the mark of the child of God that he has a holy awe of the Father, and that he pays gracious obedience to the Son of God. The Lord knows them that are His, and from that perfect knowledge He draws this short but sufficient outline of the character of His own. May holy fear and constant obedience be in us and abound!

Note that the Lord not only makes an inquiry of these people, but He takes note of their condition. He is not indifferent to their state. When they walk in darkness He is with them, and when they have no light He still beholds them. The Lord is very sensitive to the sorrows of His chosen, and very quick to help them. When He finds them walking in darkness He graciously counsels and advises them, that so He may most effectually help them. Thus says the gracious Lord to the benighted one, “Let him trust in the name of the Lord, and stay upon his God.” That same God who says of His vineyard, “I the Lord do keep it; I will water it every moment: lest any hurt it, I will keep it night and day,” also spies out His children in the dark, and looking upon them with an eye of tender love, He directs their course. This is the word of wisdom by which He directs each one of them through the darkness, “Let Him trust in the name of the Lord, and stay upon his God.”

To come at once to the text without further preface, I shall notice, first, *what is this condition* in which some of God’s people are found? They walk in darkness, and have no light. Secondly, *what is there to trust to when a man is in such a condition?* All is dark, and there is no light, and he is then bidden to trust. What is there to trust to? Thirdly, *why should we thus trust?* What is the warrant for trusting at such a time? And fourthly, *what will come of such a trust?* If a man really exhibits confidence in God when he has no light, what will be the end of his confidence?

I. First, then, WHAT IS THIS CONDITION INTO WHICH A CHILD OF GOD MAY COME? The person described is one that fears the Lord, and obeys the voice of His servant, yet “walks in darkness, and has no light.”

To many who know nothing of Christian experience *this condition might seem to be a surprising one*. Shall the child of light walk in darkness? The normal condition of a child of God is to walk in the light, as God is in the light, and to have fellowship with Him; how comes he, then, to have no light? He that believes in the Lord Jesus Christ has passed from darkness to light, and he shall never come into

condemnation; how, then, does he come into darkness? In the darkness of sin and ignorance we no longer walk, but with the darkness of trouble and perplexity we are sometimes surrounded. The Lord is our light and our salvation, and therefore we do not walk in that darkness wherein the prince of darkness rules supreme, but yet at times we are in the gloom of sadness, and we see no light of consolation. It is not always so. Many Christian people go on year after year in uninterrupted sunshine, and I do not see why we should not all look upon continued joy in the Lord as possible to ourselves. Why should not our peace flow on like an ever-widening river? Those of you who are always bright need not be afraid of your gladness. O Lord! We are now and then in the dark, but we do not wish others to be so. Spiritual darkness of any sort is to be avoided, and not desired, and yet, surprising as it may seem to be, it is a fact that some of the best of God's people frequently walk in darkness; yes, some of them are wrapt in a sevenfold gloom at times, and to them neither sun, nor moon, nor stars appear. As the pastor of a large church, I have to observe a great variety of experiences, and I note that some whom I greatly love and esteem, who are, in my judgement among the very choicest of God's people, nevertheless, travel most of the way to heaven by night. They do not rejoice in the light of God's countenance, though they trust in the shadow of His wings. They are on the way to eternal light, and yet they walk in darkness. Heirs of a measureless estate of bliss, they are now without the small change and spending money of comfort which would make their present existence delightful. It is idle to attempt to judge a man's real character before God by his present state of feeling. You may be full of mirth, and yet it may be the crackling of thorns under a pot, which is noisy for the time, but is soon over. On the other hand, you may be bowed down with sorrow, and yet it may only be that "light affliction which is but for a moment," which works out, for you "a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory." We should have thought, judging after the manner of men, that the good were always happy, as one of our children's songs so positively declares. When first brought home to the great Father, we thought that henceforth it would be all music and dancing and fatted calf, world without end. But it is not so; we have heard the elder brother's ungenerous voice since then, and we have found out many things which we wish we could forget. We dreamed that the year would be summer throughout all its months; the time of the singing of birds was come, and we reckoned that it was to continue through the year. Alas! The birds have ceased their songs, and the swallows are pluming their wings to depart, and in a few days we shall be walking among the falling leaves, and preparing our winter garments with which to meet the biting frosts. We have not found perfect bliss beneath the moon. If instead of judging by the sight of our eyes we had turned to the records of the family of God, we should long ago have been enlightened of our ideal heaven below. It is written, "Whom the Lord loves He chastens, and scourges every son whom He receives." Between the head of the way and the Celestial City the road is rough and the nights are long. They that go on pilgrimage tell us of the Delectable Mountains, and they dilate upon the glittering hilltops of glory which they have seen from afar when gazing from Mount Clear, but they also warn us of the Hill Difficulty, and especially of the Valley of the Shadow of Death, through which all those must force their way who are resolved to go on pilgrimage to the City of God. Be not, therefore, surprised as though some strange thing had happened unto you, if you find yourself in darkness, for this text warns you of what you may expect. We may fear God and carefully obey His servant, and yet we may be out after dark and find the streets of daily life as foggy and obscure for us as for others.

This condition is a severe test of grace. Now we shall see how far the man's courage is of the right sort. Darkness is an evil that our soul does not love, and by it all our faculties are tried. If you are in your own house in the dark it does not matter, though children do not like to be put to bed in the dark even in their own little room, but if you are on a journey and you come to a wild moor, or a vast forest, or to terrible mountains, it appalls you to find that the sun is setting, and that you will be abroad in the dark. Darkness has a terrible power of causing fear; its mystery is an influence creating dread. It is not what we see that we dread, as much as that which we do not see, and therefore exaggerate. When darkness lowers down upon the believer's mind it is a great trial to his heart. He cries, "Where am I? And how did I come here? If I am a child of God, why am I thus? Did I really repent and obtain light so as to escape the darkness of sin? If so, why am I conscious of this thick gloom? Did I really joy in Christ and think I had received the atonement? Why, then, has the sun of my joy gone down so hopelessly? Where are now the loving-kindnesses of the Lord?" The good man begins to question himself as to every point of his

profession, for in the dark he cannot even judge his own self. What is worse, he sometimes questions the truth which he has before received, and doubts the very ground on which his feet are resting. Satan will come in with vile insinuations questioning everything, even as he questioned God's Word when he ruined our race in the garden. It is possible at such times even to question the existence of the God we love, though we still cling to Him with desperate resolve. We undergo a life and death struggle while we hold on to the divine verities. We are at times sorely put to it, and scarcely know what to do. Like the mariners with whom Paul sailed, we cast four anchors out of the stern, and look for the day. Oh, that we could be certain that we are the Lord's! Oh, that we could apprehend the sure promises of the Lord, and our portion in them! For a while the darkness is all around us, and we perceive no candle of the Lord, or spark of experimental light with which to break the gloom. This darkness is very trying to faith, trying to love, trying to hope, trying to patience, trying to every grace of the spiritual man. Blessed is the man who can endure this test.

While it is thus trying, *it is also very sorrowful*. It is a pleasant thing for the eyes to behold the sun, and a painful thing to be without it. We are in heaviness at such times. The darkness which is spoken of in the text includes providential trial of many sorts. At the present moment many of God's people are in the dark in reference to their temporal circumstances. Business used to prosper, and things went well with them, but everything runs the other way at this season. They were not ambitious to accumulate great riches, they were perfectly satisfied if they had bread to eat, and raiment to put on, but now even this seems to be denied them. They are out of work, or business is gradually dying out, and their means of support will soon disappear. This is a new trial for those who have hitherto had abundance, and naturally it makes them walk in darkness. Oh, you that have a superfluity of this world's goods, you little know the darkness which comes over the hearts of God's servants when they are not able to provide things honest in the sight of all men, and are afraid that the Lord's name will be evil spoken of because they cannot meet their engagements. When parents look at their dear children, and wonder where the next meal of bread will come from, times are dark indeed. Still, mark you, this is not *the* darkness—the darkness which might be felt. Many of God's people, by reason of a strong faith, are happier in their adversity than they were in their prosperity. I have known them ride on the crest of the wave which threatened to wreck them. They have also rejoiced in tribulations also, finding that in them the Lord blesses them with special favor.

The real darkness has come when our evidences of grace are no longer visible, and conscience pronounces an adverse verdict. As the Psalmist says, "We see not our signs." The marks of grace are hidden. Self-examination fails to reveal to the conscience the infallible marks of the Holy Spirit's work within the soul, and then the child of God feels that he is in an evil case. While I know I am the son of God I am undismayed, but when my sonship is in doubt I am distressed indeed. If a clear sense of God's love is also withdrawn from the soul darkness follows. He that used to rejoice in that love which passes knowledge now feels his heart to be as hard as a stone, without tender emotion, and almost without living desire. To be dull, and dead, and stupid, and unfeeling, is sad indeed to one whom before could dance for joy. To have the life and energy of grace decline is a grievous matter; better to see the flock cut off from the fold than grace from the heart. At such times the Holy Spirit seems to suspend His comforting and quickening operations, and in that case the outward means are of small avail. We read the Bible, and we are not cheered by the promises; we attend public services, and the silver bells of the sanctuary seem to have lost their music. The rain does not fill the pools, and when the cisterns are empty, what is the good of them? The Holy Spirit is leaving us for a while, that we may know what poor things we are apart from Him, and how useless are ordinances without His divine presence in them. At such times Satan is sure, coward as he is, to avail himself of his opportunity. When he finds us in the dark lane, he falls upon us like a cutthroat. When the Lord is manifestly with us, he sulks off, but when he sees that darkness is round about us, he seeks to drive us from our faith. "This is your hour," said Christ, "and the power of darkness," and we have had to say the same. Satan makes earnest use of his hour, and it is no fault of his that we do not die in the dark, and utterly perish from the way. Let it be clearly known that some of us who can this day speak with fully assured confidence, have, in days gone by, been sorely shaken, and have cried unto the Lord out of the low dungeon. Every particle of the faith which I have this day in the Lord my God, has passed through fire, and through water. This flaming

torch of confidence which burns before you this day was lighted for me when I was in darkness. Though we joy before the Lord as with the joy of harvest, yet we look back upon the time when we went forth weeping, bearing precious seed. All are not equally made to sorrow, but many of us are familiar with the wine of astonishment. Surely, at some time or other, all the children of God walk in darkness.

Perhaps the worst feature of this darkness is that *it is so bewildering*. You have to walk, and yet your way is hidden from your eyes. This is hard work. God will help His children, will He not? Yes, that He will, but we cannot see how! We look upward, and see no twinkling star; downward, and do not even find a glowworm. Surely, we shall see a candle in some window! But no! We are lost in a dark forest. Have we not somewhere about us a match that we can strike? We fumble for it; we find it, it is damp, we have no light. The question that now chills the heart is—how can God deliver me? We do not see how He can make a way of escape. What simpletons we are to fancy that if *we* do not see a way of deliverance God does not see one either! If you have ever steamed up the Rhine, you have looked before you, and it has looked as if you could go no further; the river seemed to be a lake; great mountains and vast rocks blocked up all further advances. Suddenly there has been a turn in the stream, and at once a broad highway has been before you, inviting you to enter the heart of the country. Perhaps in providence you are in one of those parts of the river of life where no progress appears possible. You are quite blocked up, and this causes you darkness of mind. Cease from this unbelieving bewilderment. Rest in the Lord, and wait patiently for Him, and He shall give you your heart's desire.

Worse still is that bewilderment which comes upon us in the darkness as to what we ourselves ought to do. Men of God know, as a broad principle, that they are to do right, but the question is, what is right? Which of many courses should I take? We beg the Lord to make our path straight, but we cannot discover the road. We look for a signpost which we had seen long ago, but it is gone; we hasten to a friend, but he is as much perplexed as we are. This suspense is the hardest part of the ordeal. Not to see our way; no, not to see a foothold for the next step, is a specially trying position. If we knew what to do, or what to prepare for, we would gird our loins for the occasion, but knowing nothing, we are shut up, and cannot go forth.

Yet you notice in the text that *this does not absolve us from daily duty*. The text says, “If he *walks* in darkness, and has no light.” The walk has to be continued, though the light has departed. When it is quite dark, it is safe to sit down till the day dawns. If I cannot sleep, at any rate I can quietly rest, till the sun is up. He that believes shall not make haste, and in the dark it is best to tarry till the day dawns and the shadows flee away. That was a grand word which the Lord gave to Moses, “Stand still, and see the salvation of the Lord.” But what if you cannot stand still? What if you may not remain where you are? Something has to be done, and done at once, and thus you are compelled to walk on, though you cannot see an inch before you. What but a divine faith can do this? Here lies the stress of the difficulty; inaction might be simple, but activity in the dark, this must be the Lord's doing, and we must cry to Him to work this work in us.

But enough of this; I have given you a picture which some of you will recognize as a portrait of yourselves. Personally I have often passed through this dark valley; there is a bog on the right hand, and a deep gulf on the left, and all along the murky way, the howling of the dogs of hell, and the hissing of evil spirits, are never out of one's ears, and worst of all, the whispers of the fiend make you think his vile suggestions to be your own thoughts. The sword in the hand becomes useless, for in the dark you do not know where to strike, and no weapon remains except that of All-prayer. To walk on all through the night, and not to see a step before you, is anxious work, and yet thousands of God's pilgrims who are now yonder among the shining ones, praising and blessing His holy name, have traversed this dreadful road. Lord, help us when we also penetrate its blackness!

II. But now, secondly, I am going to turn to a practical part of this matter—WHAT IS THERE TO TRUST TO WHEN YOU ARE IN SUCH A CONDITION AS THAT? What is there to trust to? Well, says the text, “Let him trust in the name of the Lord,” or, as it should be read, “in the name of Jehovah.”

What is there to trust in *the name of Jehovah*? It is, “*I Am*,” and signifies His existence. This is a fine foundation for trust. Your friend is dead, but Jehovah is still living as the “*I AM*.” Those who could have succored you have forsaken you, but He says, “I am with you.” Trust in Him, for He is, and ever will be. He says to you, “Be still, and know that I am God.”

The name of the Lord contains within it immutability. The Lord calls Himself, “I am that I am”—the unchanging God! Remember how He said, “I am the Lord, I change not; therefore you sons of Jacob are not consumed.” When you cannot see an inch before you, trust in Him that is, that was, and is to come. He is our dwelling place in all generations. He is the “same yesterday, today, and forever,” and therefore our confidence in Him should not abate. Here is a Rock under your feet. If you trust in an unchanging God, whose love, and faithfulness, and power cannot be diminished, however dark your way may be, then you have a glorious object for your faith to rest upon!

But we understand by the name, *the revealed character of God*. When you cannot see your way, then open this Book and try to find out what sort of God it is in whom you trust. See what He did in the ages past; see what He has promised to do in all time present. Behold His infinite love in the gift of His dear Son. Think of all the immeasurable blessings which He has prepared for them that love Him, which He has laid up for the golden age. As you remember what the Lord is, and how He deals with His people, you will find light springing up in the midst of the thick darkness. What a joy it must have been to Moses when God proclaimed before him the name of the Lord! Moses had asked to see God’s glory, and we read, “The Lord passed by before him: and proclaimed, The Lord, The Lord God, merciful and gracious, long-suffering, and abundant in goodness and truth, keeping mercy for thousands, forgiving iniquity and transgression and sin.” As you study the glorious character of the Lord God, whose mercy endures forever, I think you will find your spirit rising above the floods of your trouble, and floating joyously upon the waters even as the ark of Noah in the day of the deluge. The name of the Lord is a strong tower. “They that know Your name will put their trust in You.”

By “the name of the Lord” is also meant *His dear Son*, for it is in Jesus Christ that Jehovah has proclaimed His name. Jesus says, “He that has seen Me has seen the Father.” When it is dark around you and within you, then get to your Savior, and think of Him, and all His sorrow and His victory. Picture Him before your eyes bleeding His life away upon the cross for you, offering Himself up a glorious Sacrifice to put away your sin, and as you hear His cries, and perceive the flowing of His blood, you will gain comfort and joy such as will turn your darkness into day.

It is also good, dear Friends, when you are thinking of the name of the Lord, to remember that to you it signifies *what you have seen of God in your own experience*. This is His memorial or name to you. A grand thing it is, when at present you have no consolation, to recollect the consolation you enjoyed in years gone by. Oh the days when He did help us! When His arm was made bare on our behalf! I recollect that morning, you recollect it too; when the Lord brought you up out of the horrible pit. You said, “Blessed be His glorious name! What a deliverance I have had! I shall never doubt Him again!” O poor stupid, you are doubting Him now! But why? Do you not think that if you would revive those songs, of the Red Sea, when you sang, “Sing unto the Lord, for He has triumphed gloriously,” you would be ashamed to doubt the Lord today? Did not Israel pass through the sea on foot, even in the darkness of the night, when Pharaoh could not see his way? The Lord God Himself in the pillar of fire was the light of His people, but apart from that they had no other light, and it is so with you, all other light is gone, but Jehovah is with you, therefore be not afraid—

*“His love in time past forbids us to think
He’ll leave us at last in trouble to sink;
Each sweet Ebenezer we have in review
Confirms His good pleasure to help us quite through.”*

“Let him trust in the name of the Lord.”

But, furthermore, the text says, “Let him rely upon his God.” Let him lean upon his God; make God his stay, his prop, his rest. This is a variation from the former sentence. He was to trust in the name of Jehovah, but now he is to *lean upon “his God.”* You have taken God to be your God, have you not? If so, He has also taken you to be His own. There is a covenant between you; lean on that covenant. Treat it as a valid covenant in full force. Surely you are not dealing with a liar. That covenant of the Lord which was sealed and ratified by an oath—surely you do not think little of it? Well, now, lean wholly and fully upon Him who is your covenant God. Brethren, I am often brought to this pass that I say to myself—“Lord, if these Scriptures are not indeed a revelation of God, and inspired, then it is all over with me, for I have no other hope.” But if this Book is a faithful record of what God has said to me—and

I am sure it is—then I cannot too confidently rest in what He has here recorded. I will prove the truth of His gospel. I will rely upon His promise with all my might. I have never yet hung a weight upon God's promise too heavy for it to bear. I have never trusted God in prayer with a confidence beyond what I have known Him to justify. Up to now we have used tests innumerable and proofs superabundant, and we find the old Book to be true. As silver tried in a furnace of earth, purified seven times, so have we found the promises and the covenant of God. Therefore I say to you, in the language of the text, if you walk in darkness, and have no light, trust in the name of the Lord, and stay yourself upon your God.

III. Thirdly and with great brevity, **WHY SHOULD WE TRUST GOD AT SUCH TIMES?** If the Lord has taken away the light, and is trying us so severely, why should we trust Him now? I answer, *if you do not trust Him now, you will have cause to suspect whether you ever did trust Him at all.* When your children were about you, and you were healthy, honored, and prospering, you said, "I have faith in God." Was it faith if it departs from you now that your children are buried, your home is desolate, and you are sick, and old, and poor? Was it faith in God at all? Was it not a cheerfulness which arose out of your surroundings? If you cannot bear to be stripped as Job was, have you the same precious faith with that man of God? Fair weather faith is a poor imitation of the real grace. I entreat you to play the man, and say, "Though He slays me, yet will I trust in Him," for if you cannot do so, your strength is small and your faith is questionable.

You are bound to trust in the Lord now in the time of darkness because *His promises were made for dark times.* When a shipwright builds a vessel, does he build it to keep it upon the stocks? No, he builds it for the sea and the storm. When he was making it he thought of tempests and hurricanes; if he did not, he was a poor ship builder. When God made you a believer He meant to try you, and when He gave you the promises, and bade you trust them, He gave such promises as are suitable for times of tempest and tossing. Do you think God makes shams like some that have made belts for swimming, which were good to exhibit in a shop, but of no use in the sea? We have all heard of swords which were useless in war, and even of shoes which were made to sell, but were never meant to walk in. God's shoes are of iron and brass, and you can walk to heaven in them without their ever wearing out, and His lifebelts, you may swim a thousand Atlantics upon them, and there will be no fear of your sinking. His word of promise is meant to be tried and proved. O man, I beseech you do not treat God's promises as if they were curiosities for a museum, but use them as everyday sources of comfort. Trust the Lord whenever your time of need comes on.

Besides, notice that *here a permit is especially issued for you, to allow you to trust in God in darkness.* Thus says the Lord, "*Let him trust.*" Satan says he shall not trust, but the Lord says, "*Let him trust,*" and if the Lord gives us permission to trust we will not suffer the world, the flesh, or the devil to keep us back from our privilege. "*Let him trust*" is our divine warrant for reposing on the Lord, and we mean to use it. This is the password which lets us through the gates of the promise into the royal chamber of rest.

More than this, *I understand this verse to be a command to trust in the name of the Lord.* It is an order to trust in our God up to the hilt, for it bids us *stay* ourselves upon our God. We are not fitfully to trust, and then to fear, but to come to a stay in God, even as ships enter a haven, cast their anchors, and then stay there till the tempest is past. Let us say, "This is my last dependence; this is my stay, and here I will remain forever." O brothers and sisters, we often act very foolishly, for we try to get a stay within ourselves. Did you ever hear of a captain of a vessel driven about by rough winds that wanted anchorage and tried to find it on board his vessel? He desires to place his anchor somewhere on board the ship where it will prove a holdfast. He hangs it at the prow, but still the ship drives; he exhibits the anchor upon deck, but that does not hold the vessel; at last he puts it down into the hold, but with no better success. Why, man alive, anchors do not hold as long as they are on board a ship. They must be thrown into the deep, and then they will get a grip of the sea bottom, and hold the vessel against wind and tide. As long as ever you have confidence in yourselves, you are like a man who keeps his anchor on board his boat, and you will never come to a resting place. Over with your faith into the great deeps of eternal love and power, and trust in the infinitely faithful One: Then shall you be glad because your heart is quiet. Stay yourself upon your God, because He commands you to do so. Do not dare to hesitate.

Look, sirs! If you do not rely upon God in the dark, *it would seem as if, after all, you did not trust God, but were trusting to the light*, or were relying on your own eyesight. Too often we think we believe, but all the while we are miles off from believing. Unless we trust in God alone, and in God wholly, we do not trust Him at all. Faith is the opposite of sight. When a man sees he has no need of faith. Blessed is he to whom God Himself is all the light he needs.

Do remember one thing more, that you and I, in times of darkness, may well trust in God that He will not fail us, for *our blessed Lord and Master was not spared the blackest midnight that ever fell on human mind*. He, too, cried out, “What shall I say?” Distraction seized upon His mind, also, and He was exceedingly sorrowful, even unto death. Do you expect that you shall be treated better than the Head of the house, the “first-born among many brethren”? If He trusted in God and was delivered, do the same and you shall follow in His footsteps into the brightness of the light, even as you have followed those footsteps into the blackness, and the darkness.

IV. So I finish with this last point; WHAT WILL COME OF IT IF WE DO TRUST IN GOD IN THE DARK? Now, whether you are saint or sinner, I want you to lend me your ears for a minute or two while I try to show what will come of trusting in God when you have nothing else to trust to.

In the first place, *such a faith will glorify God*. It does not glorify God to trust Him when you have a thousand other props and assistances. No, we glorify Him when we trust His bare arm. It honors God when in darkness, despondency, and despair we can bravely say, “Still I believe Him. I take hold upon His strength in the midst of my feebleness. If I perish, I perish, but I know He will not let me perish trusting in Him.” The cherubim and seraphim glorify God with their endless songs, but not more than a poor downcast soul can do when in its distress it casts itself on God alone. See what you can do! Will not this argument move you to trust, to trust even now, when all things seem to go awry? Some of you can sincerely say, “We would gladly do or suffer anything to glorify God.” Well, do this; believe in the Lord, and in Jesus Christ, whom He has sent.

In the next place, it is true that very likely through this darkness of yours *you will be humbled*. Walking in darkness and seeing no light, you will form a very low idea of yourself, and this will be a choice blessing. We undervalue humility, but it is one of the most golden of the graces. Perhaps some of us need humbling more than any other operation of the Holy Spirit. I believe that those who despond and despair are all the happier when humility has had her perfect work upon them. We are so great! So big! That letter “I”—there seems to be a kind of sarcasm in the form of it; it is such a straight, unbending letter, it never bows its knee or its back! Perhaps our darkness is sent to us to make our pride stoop towards the ground, while it gropes its way. Deliverance from pride will be a lasting gain to us. O my friend, you are getting good by the painful process which reveals to you your littleness. Do not fret because you now see your folly, your helplessness, your emptiness; all this will be a mine of wealth to you.

Next to that, if you can trust God in your trial, *you will prove and enjoy the power of prayer*. The man that has never needed to pray cannot tell whether there is anything in prayer or not. You that have always had your bread every morning scarcely know the value of that request, “Give us this day our daily bread,” but there are poor people here at this hour to which that petition is peculiarly sweet. He that has prayed for his breakfast values the providence which sent it. If you were never in your life in any sort of trial, what do you know you about prayer? Why, then, do you speak lightly of that which you understand not? He that has carried his need to the Lord—a great and urgent need which could not have been supplied by all the world besides—he, I say, who has gone with that need to his heavenly Father, and pleaded the promise, and obtained a heavenly reply, he is the man who can witness that verily there is a God that hears prayer. Those philosophers that sneer at prayer, what do they know about it? They are strangers to prayer, and therefore unable to judge its power. Suppose a dozen of them should swear that they have prayed, and that God has not heard their prayers, we should believe it, and we should also come to the conclusion that prayers from men of their order ought not to be heard. Surely he that comes to God must believe that He is, and these gentlemen will not even accept that point as certain. But when we pray, and the Lord hears us, can any form of argument disprove a fact? A fact will stand against all reasoning; it is an unyielding rock, against which the waves of skepticism hurl themselves in vain. Brethren, it is the prayer in the dark which brings us most light when we perceive that it is surely heard. How could you pray, O man, if you had all your desires fulfilled without making request unto God? If

you had nothing to pray for, how could you prove the efficacy of prayer? If you are so wise, and good, and great that you can do without God, go and do without Him if you dare. But the poor and needy will still be glad to cry unto Him. May God empty you, and drive you in agony to your knees, then shall you be able to test whether He is a God that hears prayer or not!

If in your darkness you will go to God and trust Him, *you will become an established Christian*. Yours will not be that timid bulrush faith which bows before every wind; you will be rooted and grounded in assurance of faith. These trials of yours will help to root you fast in the good soil of confidence in God. In days to come you will bless God for the clouds and the darkness, since through them your tried faith grew into strong faith, and your strong faith ripened into full assurance. Doubtless faith will make our nights the fruitful mothers of brighter days.

And let me close by saying, that by and by—and perhaps much sooner than we think—*we shall come out into greater light than we have as yet hoped for*. Perhaps half-a-mile ahead you will find light springing up, even light which has long ago been sown for the righteous. Your weeping is nearly over; joy comes in the morning. You shall sit down and say, “I did not think the day would break so soon, but now the sun is up, I perceive that even in the night I have been preserved from a thousand dangers, and I have passed safely where none but the Lord Himself could have held me up.”

Brethren, let us even now sing unto the Lord a new song, for He has done marvelous things. He has led the blind by a way that they knew not. He has given us treasures of darkness. He has turned our mourning into dancing. He has made us glad in His name. Praise to Him forever, yes, praise forevermore.

How loudly some of us will sing when once we get to heaven! When we leap ashore upon the golden strand how we will magnify that omnipotent love which kept us from ten thousand devouring waves! Surely in the heavenly choirs certain voices reach to higher notes than all others, for they have known the heights and depths of love divine. There will be a fullness, roundness, and sweetness of tone about certain voices which shall make them notable among the celestials, even as Heman, and Asaph, and Ethan were notable among the sweet singers of Israel in the temple below. Who are these, and from where did they come? Surely the one answer will be, “These are they that came out of great tribulation, and have washed their robes, and made them white in the blood of the Lamb.”

Therefore be of good cheer, O you people of God who walk in darkness, for you will have a full reward.

And you poor troubled ones, who have as yet no hope, and are afraid that God has cast you away forever, come and rest in Jesus Christ this morning. Trust in Jesus, and defy the darkness and the devil who rules over it. As soon as you dare to trust in Christ Jesus our Lord your salvation is secured. Do but trust, and your Savior is bound to answer to your trust, and make it good by saving you. The Lord bless you for Jesus’ sake! Amen.

PORTION OF SCRIPTURE READ BEFORE SERMON—ISAIAH 1.

HYMNS FROM “OUR OWN HYMN BOOK”—181, 689, 691.

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